



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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The Debate Over “Common Core” – What’s it All About?

By Representative Gary Hebl

There are many questions regarding the “Common Core Standards” for kindergarten through 12th grade education in Wisconsin. What is Common Core?

Common Core Standards include achievement goals, not curriculum. The standards are expectations for the literacy and math skills we want our children to achieve at various grade levels.

Common Core sets standards. Local schools still set curricula for their district and have control over what books are used. The only “required readings” listed in the Common Core Standards are the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address.

How did the Common Core Standards come about? Seven years ago, governors and state school superintendents from 48 states began developing rigorous academic goals. The Common Core Standards were initiated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers – not the federal government. The goal was to ensure our children have the skills that are critical to compete in the 21st Century economy.

What is the status of Common Core in Wisconsin today? Implementation, which began in 2010, is nearly complete, and \$25 million has been spent to carry it out.

Why the controversy? I have firmly concluded that the opposition is based on politics and not education policy. During more than 20 hours of testimony on Common Core heard around the state, not one opponent of Common Core stated a specific objection. No one said, “I oppose the language on Page Five because ...” All of the opposition was political or ideological. One person summarized in a few words the mindset of many of the opponents. She said, “I support repeal of ObamaCare and Common Core.”

Despite Wisconsin’s teachers investing in the Common Core Standards over the last four years, many Republicans in charge in Madison have vowed to repeal Common Core in Wisconsin. Most teachers agree that if indeed Republicans repeal Common Core, 424 school districts will have four years of planning completely disrupted.

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An unavoidable side effect of a repeal would be that many teachers, who have put their time, effort, and sweat equity into implementing these standards, would be incredibly discouraged by having the last four years of their professional work upended.

I do hope that as the legislature moves forward, we listen to the teachers and school administrators from around the state who we trust to educate our children.

For more information on Common Core standards, please visit <http://dpi.wi.gov/my-wi-standards>. As always, feel free to call me at (608) 266-7678 or email me at Rep.Hebl@legis.wi.gov.

Rep. Gary Hebl represents the 46th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Sun Prairie and Stoughton, the village of Cottage Grove, and the townships of Cottage Grove, Dunkirk, Pleasant Springs, and Sun Prairie.

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